

The Superfund Process

The Superfund program was enacted by Congress in December 1980. The law established a program to investigate and initiate actions against actual and potential releases of hazardous chemicals and other substances at sites throughout the United States. In 1986, Congress reauthorized Superfund and increased the size of the fund from \$1.6 billion to \$8.5 billion. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administers the Superfund program in cooperation with individual states.

The Superfund process can differ from each site. There are usually six phases which begin when a site is identified and concluded with a final remedy.

EPA monitors the site throughout the process. If at any time contamination becomes an immediate threat to public health or the environment, EPA may conduct an emergency action, known as a removal action.

EPA attempts to identify parties who may be legally responsible for site contamination. Once identified, these parties are asked to participate in the investigation and remedial process. If they do not agree to participate, EPA may seek their participation through legal means.

The EPA Region 6, Superfund Program has established a toll free number to provide direct access to the general public and to increase community involvement in the Superfund Program.

Just dial 1-800-533-3508



Identification



Before most people understood how certain wastes might threaten public health and the environment, hazardous wastes were often disposed of at locations where they could either enter the ground, water, or air. Now these sites are being brought to the attention of EPA by private citizens, and local and state agencies.

Assessment



A preliminary inspection of the site is conducted by EPA or a state agency. The site is assessed for the presence of hazardous chemicals and other substances and their potential impact on public health or the environment.

NPL Placement



If EPA finds that a site poses a serious actual or potential threat to the community, the site is placed on the National Priorities List (NPL), a roster of the nation's worst hazardous waste sites. The NPL currently includes more than 1,100 sites nationwide.

Investigation



EPA conducts a two-part investigation of all NPL sites. The first part, a remedial investigation, identifies contamination and site-related threats to the environment and public health. The second part of the investigation, a feasibility study, evaluates various approaches to addressing site conditions.

Preferred Remedy



EPA selects a preferred remedy for the site from among the alternatives presented in the feasibility study. After EPA recommends its choice, the public, state and local officials are given an opportunity to comment on it. After it considers the comments, EPA selects the final remedy for the site.

Final Remedy



Following the selection of a final remedy, EPA designs and implements the chosen remedy. EPA negotiates with parties responsible for contamination of the site to design, implement and pay for the final remedy. EPA may, through legal action, later recover costs from the responsible parties.